



# **HOUSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **MEDIA ALERT**

### **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES**

*Saving Lives and Protecting Property*

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**DATE:** 12.18.2006

**CONTACT:** Karen Cambias 713-495-4227

### **Safety Tips from City of Houston EMS Physician Director/Public Health Authority Dr. David E. Persse**

#### **What emergencies generate the most 911 calls for HFD EMS?**

Motor vehicles crashes are the number one cause of 911 calls to HFD EMS. From January 1, 2006 to June 30, 2006, HFD EMS was dispatched to 15,416 motor vehicle crashes. Of the total 116,714 EMS emergencies during the first half of 2006, 13.2% were for motor vehicle crashes.

#### **What are some of the best measures to take to avoid a motor vehicle crash?**

**Don't drink and drive.** Designate a sober driver and intervene if others attempt to drink and drive. If you even suspect that you have had too much alcohol, call someone or a cab for transport. The Texas Department of Public Safety estimates that a first-offense DWI costs at least \$3,180 and could cost as much as \$17,000, not including lost work time and any liability costs.

**Don't Speed.** Speeding reduces the amount of time drivers have to avoid crashes and lengthens stopping distances, increasing both the likelihood and the severity of crashes that do occur. Higher crash speeds reduce the ability of vehicles, restraints, and roadway hardware such as guardrails, barriers, and impact attenuators to protect occupants.\*

#### **Know and Obey the Law.**

Be aware of and obey posted speed limits.

Observe warning signs.

Adapt your driving habits to changing weather and road conditions.

Keep cell phone use to a minimum and avoid other distractions while driving.

Don't tailgate.

Keep your car in good working condition. Check the tire pressure, motor oil, transmission fluid, lights, heater, cooling system and wipers according to the manufacture's manual and especially before a trip.

#### **What are some of the best measures to take to avoid a motor vehicle injury?**

**-more-**

**Buckle Up.** Safety belts installed and worn according to the manufacturer's specifications are the most effective protection in vehicle crashes.

A Texas law enforcement officer can cite a driver for a seat belt violation without any additional cause such as a malfunctioning brake or headlight light. In Texas a safety belt violation can result in a fine of \$100 to \$200 plus applicable court fees.

**Insist that all passengers buckle up.** In Texas all passengers in the front seat of a vehicle must wear seat belts regardless of age. Children should remain in a safety seat with full harness, at least until they reach 40 pounds. For children between 40-80 pounds, a belt-positioning booster seat should be used to help the adult lap and shoulder belt fit the child's size. The adult lap and shoulder belt alone will not fit most children until they are at least 4'9" tall and weigh about 80 pounds.

Never place an infant in a rear-facing child safety seat in the front seat of a vehicle with a passenger-side air bag. Should an auto crash occur, the force of the deploying air bag will hit the seat and could seriously injure an infant.

**Remove any items from your vehicle that may become airborne and cause injury upon impact.**

For non-emergency roadside assistance or to alert a law enforcement officer call the Texas Department of Public Safety at 1-800-525-5555.

References:

HFD EMS Database

[http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director\\_staff/public\\_information/seatbelt.htm](http://www.txdps.state.tx.us/director_staff/public_information/seatbelt.htm)

\*Insurance Institute for Highway Safety